

Chapter 1

Anxiously Harvey leans on the kitchen counter, gnawing at her fingernails as the dial beep keeps humming out of her phone.

“Oh, come on, pick up.” She murmurs impatiently and the longer it buzzes the harder she bites and the faster her foot taps against the cold wooden floor.

“*You have reached five five five eight zer-*” By the fifth time the robotic voice lets her down, she hangs up and pushes the phone away in frustration. The phone slides over the white marble countertop and hits the back wall with an anticlimactic thud. The kitchen is dark grey with golden handles and a massive gas hob.

The only sign of anyone living there is a long, faint line going over the kitchen isle from when Harvey’s older brothers got into a fight. Francesco had picked his identical twin up and pushed him onto the hard countertop, breaking their fancy arched sink. In the moment she had laughed at their immature behaviour, but when their mom came home from work, she had realised the house they had inherited from their grandparents carried new expectations of all of them. They had gone from letting a flat in Croydon to being level up to a town house in South Ken. Suddenly they weren’t reckless kids with valid excuses because they were all busy running between school and sports clubs, they were expected to look representable at all times in case the neighbour gazed into the window. They couldn’t raise their voices in case someone heard. Everything was suddenly wrapped in bubble wrap, shiny, gold bubble wrap.

Harvey sighs and opens the fridge lighting up the dim space around her in the same tired manner. The fridge is massive, made for a whole family, with content of a sad widow. Like every night she grabs one of the cardboard boxes from her dad’s restaurant and pauses for a good minute murmuring to herself about which wine she should have. The microwave pings, as she’s tipping half a glass of white down her throat.

“Mm,” she purrs to herself admiring the crystal glass. Her mom would be fuming if she knew, and it made Harvey wish to break it even more.

She balances the steaming container in one hand, and the bottle and a tall glass in the other as she pads barefoot over to the couch. It’s so quiet under the high ceilings that her mind replays loud memories to try and fill the void. She looks past the couch and remembers a few years earlier when the twins would still race each other down the stairs in the morning. Two short, identical, curly haired guys on a quest for a massive breakfast, back when they still

used the hob. Over the years the running had turned into mindless steps as they texted their girlfriends, to all of a sudden one day when Giovanni had moved out, and Francesco travels so much with work, it's like he doesn't live here anymore.

She plumps down in the corner of the soft couch, throwing her legs up as well. The TV lights is brutal for her eyes as it turns on. She switches through the channels and lands on an episode of Real Housewives of Beverly Hills that she had already seen. Lazily she stirs her food and doesn't eat but tips the rest of the wine down easily.

Harvey sighs heavily before putting down the now chilled container. The women on the screen have dressed up to the nines and are sat around a big dining table, overlooking Tokyo's nightlife. Their voices grow louder and their words further and further away from reality. Lisa Vanderpump comes up solo on the screen in a personal interview, with her hot pink blouse against a white backdrop with beautiful, pink flower creations.

Harvey pauses the screen, "You know, Lisa, I feel deflated." She looks down herself, patting the washed cotton of her t-shirt sadly. The fake tan on her legs is enhanced by the light couch and she immediately wishes she can scrub it off. "What's the point, you know? They're not here anymore. *No one's* here." She sighs feeling even lower for wanting Lisa to answer her. "I can't do this anymore." She whispers looking down at the half-drunk wine bottle. It didn't have the answers last week or yesterday, and it doesn't have the answers today either.

On a whim she turns the TV off and gathers her keys. Fifteen minutes later she clicks the city bike into its holder a few corners away from her dad's apartment building. Her wild baby hairs stick to her forehead in a mix of the summer humidity and small beads of sweat, and she impatiently tries to push them back into her ponytail.

As she comes up to the silver calling and presses Diego and Mads Rizzo, a sudden insecurity comes over her. Are they going to be happy to see her? She takes a deep breath, taking in the faint smell of salt from the brackish water of the river Thames that lies on the other side of the road.

"Hello?" A confused voice comes out over the speaker. Her father.

"Ehm, hi. It's me, Harvey."

There's a pause filled with static from the old intercom. "Oh, Harvey. Is everything okay?"

His voice softens, but the bad audio makes his Italian accent even harder to understand.

"Yeah." She hesitates. "Eh, could I come up?"

“Eh, yeah of course.” The intercom disconnects as the big wooden door makes a buzzing sound. She pulls on the handle, only now realising it must’ve been a year since she was here last.

The lobby hasn’t changed since she was here last, it was cream coloured with fishtail wooden floors that creaked occasionally under her weight. As she reaches the end of the carpeted hall, an awkward feeling arises as she becomes unsure on which of the two doors is her dad’s apartment.

“Has anything happened?” Diego’s pokes his head out of the door on her left. His hazel eyes are filled with concern and surprise. “Come in.” He opens the door fully and waves her in, revealing himself in a dark blue bathrobe that he pulls closer around him.

The apartment holds a sweet familiar scent of garlic and basil, just like her Nonna’s house in Italy. The walls of the apartment are white, but covered with either big mirrors with golden frames or paintings that Mads, and her dad has bought on travels. Every floor is covered with a morrocan inspired carpet, so only a few pieces of dark wood peaks through here and there. Harvey covers her arms from the chilly air. After growing up with the scorching summers of Northern Italy with few opportunities around to cool down, her dad has grown a resentment to heat over the years. The AC is always blasting in any place he has ever lived causing the people around him to either grow immune to the cool air or become okay with constantly having a sniffly nose.

“Shoes off, right?” Harvey asks, looking around the narrow hallway for a place to put her slippers. Diego tries to hide it, but she catches the slight raise of his eyebrows. It seems he is surprised by the fact that she wanted to come all the way in, like she should have asked for permission first. Is it wrong of her to think she already has it?

“Yes,” he nodded and closed the door.

How long has he been so small? She thought. Her father lost his curls before he turned thirty, leaving a half wreath going from ear to ear with dark, black hair, that slowly grew greyer. In the passing years the hair had grown thinner as well, and his skin greyer from the lack of sun. Diego still loved travelling, but now he searches for the best wine bars and museums instead of mountains to climb and waves to surf. Harvey wonders if she feels he has become more of himself or if he somewhere on the way has lost some pieces of him.

“Are you hungry?” He asks as he sees she’s still waiting for him.

Harvey shakes her head.

“Wine?”

She nods furiously.

On their way through the living room she touches over the cool leather of the couch armrest. Their apartment reminded her of the life they had once lived with the mix of wooden furniture and the red, velvet chair she always sat in after school when she was younger. Unlike her mom's house, her dad displayed pictures of the kids proudly. Diego's new star of the family was Giovanni's 2 year old daughter Bianca. She was his princess, and Harvey hated how she sometimes felt envious of the halo that floated over Bianca's head. Back in the day Harvey had been the princess of the family, running around her Nonna's farm in pretty summer dresses that her mom begged her not to rip. She would climb trees and hang upside down, pretending she didn't know how to come down again, just so someone had to come to her rescue. In reality she had loved the feeling of seeing the world through a dizzy and obscured vision. It had felt like a dream, the whole family living together under one roof, with so little commitment to anyone else that they created their own private bubble. It had all changed when her parents decided to move back to her mom's home city. The second they came to London they had gotten a divorce and moved into separate apartments. The city was so busy and noisy compared to their little town, and out of nowhere suddenly their family had also become busy and noisy, with little time for each other. Cathrine, their mom had immediately gone back into hotel managing, trying to avoid her parents finding out she was back in town, but inevitably they found out and hunted her down to persuade her back into the family business. Harvey had never known her grandparents until then. They were charming and generous, but it always came with a price. David, her grandfather was a standout lawyer, and Clarissa her grandmother was the heir of one of the UK's biggest hotel chains. A chain Cathrine now runs with her Uncle, Dominic, the family business she had sworn to never be a part of.

As they had settled into London, the real reason for their move became clear, but never addressed. Harvey and the twins' parents had married out of convenience. Cathrine was young and on the run from her family's expectations and Diego needed to marry a woman so his strict Catholic mother wouldn't find out he was gay.

From Harvey was ten until fifteen, Diego had been unreliable and impossible to get a hold of. He was finally free from the chackles of his mother and was living out his youth, never holding down a job and always living somewhere new with more and more ridiculous

excuses each time for why he had to move. The twins were five years older; they weren't happy about their dad never picking up the phone, but they understood more than she did. Her summer dresses and damsel in distress moments were replaced with a heavy backpack, itchy, synthetic uniforms and a dad that was looking for his own prince. Harvey found it hard to accept and withdrew from her father and some of their relationship was restored when Diego met his now husband Mads, because they opened the restaurant and he became more trustworthy as he became more settled, but the days of her letting him save her from a tree was over and it hurt to see him now be present enough to save Bianca.

"Where is Mads?" Harvey asks as her Diego pulls out a dark bottle with a burgundy seal. Today was not a red day, but if there was one field her dad never disappointed in, it was with wine, so she keeps her silence confidently. She glimpses the stack of wine bottles in the fridge and thinks to herself, *like father like daughter*.

"He went to bed a little while ago." He answers and unintentionally adds a new layer to the tension in the room. "Please, sit," he says and gestures to one of the wooden chairs.

Harvey does as he says and sits. The kitchen is small, with a round dining table for four in the middle of the room. The walls are white, and they have tall windows overlooking the street and down over the Thames, which opens up the space. Somehow Harvey feels she can breathe better, despite the awkwardness.

"Is your mom home?" Diego asks, looking through the kitchen cabinets with swift movements.

"No, she's at work."

"Is it a busy season for her?" He finds the wooden board he's looking for and brushes off some crumbs before finding three cheeses wrapped in tea towels from the metallic fridge. Harvey snorts and rubs her face fiercely. "Every season is busy. And in the hotel business there's a new season every month it seems like."

Diego laughs and nods, turning to her with a charcuterie only a professional chef could create. "I know what you mean. Hospitality is unpredictable, and as long as you customers want something you have to do what you can to please them." He takes several trips from the fridge to the counter, constantly adding more elements to the feast growing in front of him. "When is that launch party you've been working on?"

"Twenty-eight of August. We finally decided on a date last meeting." Harvey watches as her dad manoeuvres the kitchen effortlessly. Diego is completely up to date with everything that

goes on in her life. They always chat at the restaurant whether she comes to dine with them or just to pick up some takeaway, maybe that is why it is suddenly so weird to see him as just her dad again, not “her dad the restaurant owner”.

“That must be nice.” In the restaurant his words would have rung out higher, so that his positivity could carry on to the rest of the guests, here he lowers his voice to not wake up his husband.

“Yeah, it’s nice.” She sighs, feeling out of words and urge to come forward with why she’s really here. This is a mistake; she shouldn’t have come.

“Okay,” Diego puts his hands together and jumps at his own excitement, looking towards the bedroom apologetically. “Now, for the grand reveal.” He says in a lower voice and puts the board down with a proud look on his face and explains, “Cupola,” he says to a thin, long triangle of cheese. “Mozzarella di Bufala,” the white ball of soft cheese. “Pecorino, I know it’s not your favourite, but it’s so salty it goes great with the wine, because it’s very sweet.” He brushes off the thought as if it is nothing and does not even address the black and green olives, the two salamis, or the stack of prosciutto that is neatly folded with perfection.

“Bardolino, red,” he finishes and pours two generous glasses for them.

“Looks lovely,” Harvey says wrapping some mozzarella in some prosciutto.

For a while they eat in silence. Gently apologizing as their hands occasionally bump into each other as they reach for the same thing. The wine is sweet and round, and absolutely perfect with the Pecorino, just like he said. With yet another piece halfway down her throat Harvey catches her dad’s searching glances.

“What?” She asks muffled through all the cheese.

“Why did you come here tonight, Harvey?” The words are soft, yet there’s a brutality, as if he is about to call her out.

Her chest tightens like he just scared her, and she sits up straighter. “I— I know. It’s late. It is probably best if I just go.”

“No,” Diego reaches out a hand for her to stay seated, but Harvey can feel herself being more and more ready to try and ease her way out. “That is not what I mean. I’m just— What I’m so clumsily trying to say is; are you okay? You never come here anymore, what made today so different than any other night?”

Harvey swallows, her mouth filled with the salty aftertaste of the different cheeses, and hints of blackcurrant from the wine. “Ehm.” The feelings mix in her chest as she grows confused

on whether she should be shameful for showing up when it is not her home, or whether she should feel angry that it is expected for her to have a reason to want to visit her father. It's his eyes that make it difficult. The golden hint in his iris carries a warmth, that somehow makes her want to melt and tell him everything she's been thinking about, yet one of the reasons why she carries the armour she does now is because of how many times he has promised her a safe place before, but never lived up to it.

"I can't sleep." She rolls her eyes at how lame her words sound. "Like I really can't sleep. I'm talking night terrors and just the most terrible sleep paralysis ever."

"That sounds awful. Have you seen your doctor about it?"

She nods and takes a sip. "My therapist gave me some melatonin, but it doesn't help. I think it's because I'm always alone in the evening, so I'm just stuck with this growing feeling that something bad is about to happen for the last two hours of my day. And then when I first manage to fall asleep, all I've been thinking about is how scared I am that one of the terrors will come back and haunt me, so I completely sabotage myself. But it's fine, I just drink some wine and that usually helps a bit."

Diego nods understandingly, but Harvey can tell he doesn't fully understand. "So, you would like to stay here tonight?"

There is no judgment in his tone, yet she feels judged. "Yes," she admits even though it's hard.

"Okay, of course, I'll make the couch for you in a second."

Harvey presses a smile together. "Thank you."

The silence falls over them again, the only sound comes from Harvey shifting uncomfortably in her seat.

"Is that all?" Diego finally asks, after observing how his daughter anxiously picks at the food in front of her and has her eyes locked anywhere else than on him.

"Yeah."

"Harvey," he warns. "You know you can talk to me and your mom, right?"

She snorts again, this time he catches her hostility.

"What's going on?"

Tears sting behind her eyes as she meets her father's gaze. She wishes all the years of pain would sting him, just like she wishes she could have her whole family here, so they all can feel it. "I think I've lost my purpose," she admits in a tone way less forceful than she wants

to, like an arrow that lost its speed.

Diego's kind smile comes forward and he throws his hands up in the air, as if she's missed out on a huge detail. "What do you mean Harvey? I see you all the time in the restaurant. If you're not coming from a long day at school, you're on your way back from a business meeting. Always a new internship or project. Parties, dinners, always on the phone... Harvey, you live the life any young girl like you dream to live, how could you say there is no purpose?"

She smiles sadly at her father's words, as the anger again withers away somewhere inside her chest, the spark pushed down once again. "What was it like for you to live in Italy when you knew your family would never accept you for who you really are?"

Something dark comes over his face and his arms cross over his belly as if he's trying to make himself smaller. Harvey's chest stings from his pain. "It was not good." A distant memory glazes over his eyes and takes him somewhere far away from here. When he returns it's like a shadow hangs over him. Diego clears his throat. "Are you trying to tell me you're gay?"

"No, da—ad," she sighs annoyed and rolls her eyes and when she looks back he's cracked on one of his a cheeky grins. "Dad," she repeats seriously, but struggles to keep a straight face. Diego shrugs. "I would support you."

"You don't say." Harvey makes herself another pruciotto and mozzarella sandwich. "I promise that if I ever need to talk about my sexuality I'll come to you, but for now there's something else." She sighs as the tight feeling in her chest returns. "Ever since I drowned in that pool."

"Almost." Her father shoots in as if to calm himself.

"Dad, I was dead for a minute." They share an understanding look, neither of them wants to talk about it. "Ever since that day it is like something weird came in over me. My night terrors started,"

"I thought that's why you have a therapist, to help with any aftershocks of that." He shoots in again, making Harvey sigh heavily.

"And the medication she gives me help to begin with, but after a while I stopped taking them."

"Harvey," Diego warns in a strict parent tone he rarely ever let out.

"It's antidepressants. And every time I try and tell her they make feel worse; she tells me to take more. I swear every time I take them, I wake bruised because I punch the wall so hard in

my sleep trying to wake myself up.” Diego picks up his half-drunk glass and sits back a bit defiantly as if he didn’t like that she could prove him wrong. “I thought that if I completely avoided everything that had to do with swimming, I would be fine, but it’s like there’s a veil around my thoughts and I just can’t shake out of this rut that I’ve been in. And I think there might be a different reason for that than just the accident.”

Another silence passes between them, and it carries Harvey’s desperate plea. *“Please don’t fight me on this.”*

Her dad swirls the wine around his mouth as if it held the answer to her question. And then, finally, as her heart has started to pound in fear and anticipation he nods, telling her to *“go ahead.”*

She swallows and rubs her face again. “Ehm, so, okay. You know moms previous life, right?” Diego nods uncomfortably and looks towards the master bedroom. “Maybe we should make the couch.”

Harvey traces the pattern on the Moroccan inspired carpet with her pale toe. The thin line between burgundy red and light pink moves into an sharp angel, creating a mountain on her already filled in canvas. She clenches and unclenches her fists nervously, letting the chipped nails create deeper, uneven marks on the inside of her palms for each time. Diego appears soundless in the doorway with a big, fluffy pillow and multicoloured covers. Again, he signals for her to continue, then ads, “But quietly.”

Suddenly she felt she was pitching one of her marketing strategies to her superiors in the office. “Mom is a time traveller. She chose to leave the community, but that doesn’t change the fact that she has the ability, and it doesn’t change the fact that me and the boys also inherited her abilities. And I know she said for us to stay away from all of it, but about a year ago I was looking through her closet for one of my purses, and I found this huge box of documents.” Her words fall out of her mouth faster than she expected. There is something so relieving in finally saying it all out loud. “She had three heavy folders on new research done on how to travel in time and it said that only about thirty percent of a normal person’s brain is activated. Apparently, everyone’s always said we only use about ten percent of our brains but that is wrong. A time traveller uses up to about fifty percent of their brain when they travel, and while this ability develops between their early teens and their twenties, they can struggle with irregular brain activity as their abilities take shape. The last month before my accident, it was like my head was switching back and forth uncontrollably. Remember

the last race I had with the Sharks? The same thing happened then; I completely lost it.”

Diego covers the couch with a large sheet. And lightly fluffs up the pillow before laying down the covers. «What do you mean? You won, didn't you?”

Her voice grows louder in frustration, it feels like he's not taking it seriously. “Yeah, but I have no memory of the last laps. To me I was in the ocean.”

“Maybe it was adrenaline.” He dismisses the idea when he turns and sees the lonely tears that spill down her cheeks. “Is that what happened to you when you had your accident to?”

She swallows and nods. It's the first time she has admitted to it.

“Do—” Diego looks as if light suddenly dawned on him and steadies his weight against the armrest. Harvey follows his gaze to his bare legs poking out underneath the robe, the thin legs shift restless in his fluffy slippers. “You actually travelled?”

Even though he isn't looking Harvey nods, and as if he could sense her answer he continues.

“I thought your mom said you and the boys wouldn't be able to, because you don't know how to do it. There wasn't supposed to be any danger.”

She waits a bit, seeing how pale he has become she doesn't want to push him too far. Is she supposed to hug him?

No, that's too much... Isn't it?

“The papers also said that some kids don't inherit their family's ability. Maybe there was n danger before, because the boys can't travel.” This doesn't help. And Harvey is torn between leaving the rest of the conversation for the morning or just getting it all out there in the open now. “Dad, it's like something within me is trying to fight its way out, and I can't find a way to stop it. What if this is where my purpose lies.”

Diego hesitates, “You just need something else to focus on.”

“I've tried everything,” she says, more tears of desperation spilling down her cheeks. “I really have. And I can't do it any longer. I need to talk to them.”

“Your mom would never tell you where to find them.” He shrugs apologizing, as if he wishes he could help her, but Harvey knows better than to trust everything those doe eyes tell her.

“No, but I know she once told you.”

His face falls once more. “Okay, okay. Fine. I'll tell you, if you promise me one thing.

Promise you tell your mother you are going.”

The tension releases in her chest like a hundred butterflies flying around. She shrugs and smiles angelically. “Of course I'll tell her.

